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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses preschool teacher competencies and personality traits but makes no attempt to establish a picture of an ideal teacher. Five personal qualities necessary for success with young children--good physical and mental health, fondness and respect for children, a sympathetic understanding of their capacities and ways of growing, an ability to see naively and to wonder, and a sense of humor--are noted and discussed. Other desirable teacher attributes and curriculum area competencies required in the nursery school are explored. Knowledge of human development and behavior, subject matter areas, and teaching methods is recommended. Additionally, it is suggested that the preschool teacher should be able to work well with individuals and promote freedom within well chosen and clearly understood limits. It is noted that the unique demands of nursery school teaching make it important for teachers to have knowledge of and competency in nonverbal flexibly, to work with parents, and to adapt to the needs of individual children. emotional controls, skill in managing emotional ties, and the ability to plan flexibily, to work with parents, and to adapt to the needs of individual children. Other qualities which if developed can make a good teacher into an outstanding one are listed. (Author/RH)

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TEACHERS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN -- THE PERSON AND THE SKILLS *

By Rhoda W. Bacmeister

In most parts of the country we are well past the time when people assumed that any kindly woman or girl who loved children could do all that was necessary for a group of them under six years old. We now realize that some basic personality qualities, plus thorough training, are necessary to produce a competent teacher. There are important attitudes and convictions which underlie the good teacher's work and there are many skills and much "know how" to be developed by training.

To specify exactly what these qualifications must be and so describe the ideal teacher would be both difficult and fruitless. In the first place, no one person would ever combine all the desirable traits and accomplishments. In the second place, it would be a great pity to try to standardize teachers, for the individuality of the teacher, her unique interests and approaches, are very valuable. Experiences with a number of very different good teachers over the years helps the child learn to broaden his own interests and to adapt to and enjoy the endless diversity of human nature. We shall therefore make no attempt to establish a picture of a model teacher, but will rather note a few things she will have a hard time getting along without, and then a much larger number that she will find it helpful to develop.

PATIENCE

Nowadays the commonest naive comment one hears about the nursery teacher's job seems to be "I don't see how you have the patience." Yes, patience is necessary, but where does this patience with little children come from?

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HEALTH

One source is good physical health, enough energy to be untroubled by the hurly-burly of a group, the noise, the messiness, the general rambunctiousness of the young, and the confusion of half a dozen activities going on at the same time. Health is essential for regular attendance, too, and little children need the support of a familiar, dependable adult. An active, well-coordinated teacher can really enjoy the long, strenuous outdoor periods so essential to a wholesome program and can put her mind on developing truly educational enterprises outdoors as well as in. One in poor health finds it hard to encourage and guide strenuous constructive activities. She is likely, outdoors, to simply "let the children get some exercise" while she stands (or sits) idly by. She may even shorten periods or eliminate them at the least excuse of inclement weather.

Good emotional health, a cheerful, self-confident, and well balanced personality, is an equally important source of patience. Small annoyances like stubbornness or tantrums do not so rasp steady nerves, responsibilities do not weigh so heavily, as they do with a person who is herself insecure or troubled. Adaptations to other adults, co-workers and parents alike, are easier and smoother for a serene, friendly person.

A teacher who has come to terms with herself, understanding her own emotional reactions and knowing how to maintain an even balance, can accept the raw emotions of the children without feeling challenged by them. Because the teacher's personality sets the tone of the room, little children are quick to pick up adult moods and react to them. A tense teacher inspires a jittery, disorganized room, which makes her feel worse, and the situation may easily deteriorate further. A serene and happy teacher creates a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere.

RESPECT AND FONDNESS FOR CHILDREN

It is necessary, of course, to have a natural fondness for children, but perhaps more important still is having a genuine <u>respect</u> for each child as an individual just as important and interesting as any adult. This implies a willingness to let him grow at his own pace and a delight

in his progress toward his own goals as well as toward those of the culture. The teacher who really respects the child's developing personality is happy when he succeeds in moving the rocking-boat to a new position which he considers better than the one she had chosen. This is as important an achievement as when he learns to name colors. In one case independent thinking and action is taking place. In the other a recognized cultural value has been accomplished.

UNDERSTANDING AND EMPATHY

The child knows when the teacher thus feels with him, appreciating his problems and attainments in his own terms. Such empathy brings about a close rapport between child and teacher. The exact quality of this rapport differs from child to child and from teacher to teacher, but once it is established they become congenial partners in promoting the miracle of growth. It is much easier to be patient once this feeling is developed and the teacher understands and values the child's own purposes, seeing them as valid for his growth. The child will recognize the partnership, too, and be more patient with the teacher when she has to thwart him.

This vital respect for the child and his unique growth patterns is greatly helped, of course, by the understanding that comes with the study of child psychology and development. We shall speak more of this point later.

CHILD'S EYE PERSPECTIVE

In learning how a child perceives the world the young teacher can learn to see it more freshly herself, may broaden her interests and revivify the eagerness to find out about things which many adults have allowed to atrophy. She has probably seen beetles and parking meters all her life, but has she takent time to really <u>wonder</u> about either?

A child wants to know. Where is the beetle going? What does he eat? Can he really fly? Miraculous! How could he have hidden those great, gauzy wings under such little, hard wing-cases? Who comes to get the money from the parking meters? How does he do it, and what do they

look like inside when he opens them? How does the coin move the pointer? Do you know?

Any adult who gets to wondering about such things will find not only patience with children's endless questions, but an awareness of interesting possibilities in all sorts of things he has never had an idea of investigating. Examples of the inexhaustible wonders of nature and the as yet unexhausted ingenuity of man are all around us, extraordinary and fascinating. We have only to look and we shall find that the beetle can open up whole fields of nature study, the parking meter a surprising number of basic mechanical principles which are easy to understand and find uses for. A teacher cannot hope to know all the answers beforehand, but she can have learned how to go about finding out and how to make real to the children the resulting information. Adults will learn more and understand more than the children can, naturally, but that makes it all the more fun.

A SENSE OF HUMOR

Teachers ought to have fun in their work and a sense of humor is one of the blessings that assures that they shall. In fact a teacher needs two senses of humor, one to see and enjoy the comic and nonsensical which is funny to the children, and an adult one for enjoying the children themselves and the lighter side of her own problems and responsibilities. With the first she will share the children's jokes and keep them in good humor by welltimed foolishness of her own. The second will save her equanimity many a time and will provide her with a fund of amusing incidents and childish remarks to chuckle over and share with her friends who also love children.

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These five things; good physical and mental health, fondness and respect for children, a sympathetic understanding of their capacities and ways of growing, an ability to see naively and to wonder, and a sense of humor, do much to explain that patience which is so obviously needed by anyone who is to live long hours daily with the volatile young of the

species.

A student may enter training with most of them already present in embryonic form, and unless she does have a modicum of several, she may turn out to be one of those who "will never make a teacher" no matter how many courses she takes. This does not mean that none of them can be acquired, or that they can not all be deepened, made more explicit, and implemented, by her training.

BASIC CONVICTIONS

In the process, her basic convictions about children, human development, and the nature of education should emerge. If she is to respect her job as an educator in the nursery field and be happy in it, there are a few basic convictions which she will need:

1. She must know that significant learning and mental growth, as well as physical and emotional growth, begins long, long before first grade. She must count one as important as the others from the beginning and must recognize that the child's mind needs appropriate food and exercise as much as his body does. She must have some comprehension of the close and complicated interrelationships among these differing aspects of growth.

2. She must have faith in the growth drive, understanding that the child himself is basically striving to grow up, to learn, to be happy and appreciated. She must see that the early steps along the path to maturity are at least as important as the later ones, often more fundamentally so. The significant thing is not where one is on the path, but whether one is moving forward.

3. She must be willing to accept her role as a co-worker with both children and parents in fostering wholesome development, working in a spirit of mutuality for the welfare of the children.

Lip service to these ideas is not enough. They must become genuine, functioning convictions. It may take a long time to get them firmly established, for they have to become a real part of the teacher's personality, not only through study and observations, but above all by experiences as a student and teacher.

TEACHING SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

There are many immediate things for the student to learn, many com-

petencies which it will be useful for her to develop. Some of them are the stock in trade of a good teacher on any level, others are unique to, or uniquely important for, the nursery level.

It would be neither practicable nor useful to attempt here to lay down a curriculum for teacher education. However it may be suitable to mention general areas included, and to comment more specifically on competencies which the nursery situation particularly requires.

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND BEHAVIOR

As a background for her understanding of children a teacher should have some training in fields such as sociology and anthropology which deal with broad, basic aspects of human development and functioning.

Every teacher needs to know in more detail, the facts of child development not only as they are evident in the age she teaches, but also in earlier and later stages. Through the study of children one learns what interests and achievements, what capacities, and what ways of learning and behaving are most natural at each age. These norms and typical behavior patterns must be interpreted in the light of individual differences, but they form a most useful guide as to what to expect, and what is too much, or too little, to expect. The study of psychology helps develop insight into a child's world and understanding of his needs, his tensions, and the deeper meanings expressed in his play.

The teacher will always find developmental differences within her group, and she must be able to adapt her methods both to personality differences and to a considerable range of capacities and ways of learning. This is particularly true in the nursery school where most work is on an individual basis.

WORK WITH INDIVIDUALS

The teacher needs to be able to work well with <u>each</u> of the children, tempering (though not denying to herself) her natural preferences and dislikes. This is easier when she learns to study each one, trying to

comprehend his interests, his purposes and problems, and how he has developed his own characteristic way of going at them. She must, for example, see that one child must be given what seems an inordinate time for a request to sink in and bring action, while another's reaction is quick as a wink.

More and more, as she studies the children, she will acquire the ability to see subtle indications that point to special needs for help or for new opportunities. Using the "mental microscope" with which every good teacher should be equipped, she realizes the deeper significance and importance of minute incidents, of some impulsive action, of a habit of response, a characteristic gesture, the turn of a phrase. They help her to see trends which have meaning for the future. They may mean something as simple as readiness for reading or further number experiences, or as complex as a fear of one's own unworthiness.

We hear so much about potential delinquents and problem children that we are probably aware of the importance of detecting such trends early and seeing that they are properly treated and are referred to specialists when necessary.

We must not forget that children give a perceptive teacher equally significant indications of specialized abilities and interests. She should be as eager to pick these up and provide opportunities for their development as she is to instigate corrective treatments when needed. Sometimes indications of both kinds appear in the same child and one can be used to balance the other. It is right to help the weak or troubled (and troublesome) ones, but from a broad point of view, is it not at least equally important to make sure that our strong and gifted ones can develop their full potentialities? At nursery age it is not usual that this will mean referral to a specialist. Usually the alert and ingenious teacher can create special opportunities within the school for such children, and can see to it that objective reports of their achievements are included in their records for the use of future teachers.

SUBJECT MATTER

Obviously, every teacher must have a grasp of the subject matter ap-

propriate for the age she teaches. In traditional elementary schools this is pretty well specified and expectations for each grade set. Even materials and methods may be largely prescribed. Not so in the nursery school. Nevertheless there is plenty for the student to learn in the way of subject matter, materials and methods. One may almost say that anything she knows is likely to come in handy sooner or later, which is one reason why a broad liberal educational background is so valuable.

She may be quite unable to say in advance whether her children will be learning about pulleys or milkmen soon, but she knows that a good program will include the same general categories as that of later years: language arts, physical skills, creative, graphic and plastic arts, music, nature study, mathematics, science, and social relationships or cultural patterns. She needs to have some basic knowledge and competency in each of these areas and to know how to help children learn in each.

Obviously, one of the most important areas is the language which children are so busy acquiring during the nursery school years. Ability to use language correctly and fluently is therefore vital to good teaching, as is skill in making language-learning interesting fun for children. A low, pleasant voice contributes greatly to this, as well as to harmony and control in the room.

The teacher needs to know which materials and equipment are suitable for her children and how to introduce them and supervise their use, what basic skills can be expected and what limits should be set for safety or other reasons.

CONTROLS AND LIMITS

In order to provide a wholesome situation favorable to growth and learning, the teacher must know how to give appropriate freedom within well chosen and clearly understood limits. Suitable structuring of situations gives the child needed support and reassurance, so that his energies can be used constructively and not dissipated in chaotic experimentation.

The teacher needs to know how to set limits without arousing antagonism when this is possible. An understanding of children's minds and emotions will make it feasible for her to do this through positive suggestions in most cases, without resorting to the frequent "don'ts" that are so infuriating to children. In the instances when reasonable controls do bring resentment or even rebellion she needs to be able to remain firm and undisturbed. This requires a little more tact and patience in the nursery years than later, because for most children it is their first experience of controls outside the family, and the families involved are likely to have used very different degrees and methods of control. This is one of the areas in which discussion and advice may help a student to some extent, but real proficiency can be developed only by observation and experience in supervised practice and actual work as a responsible teacher.

METHODS

Setting and maintaining controls smoothly is only one aspect of the general problem of methods, into which we cannot go in detail. We can, however, differentiate certain types.

There are some skills, safety practices, information and customs of the culture which are to be "taught" in the traditional sense, through instruction and supervised practice. "Always carry a chair with the legs down," "This is the way to tie your shoe," and perhaps later, "Make an R this way--" to do endless things, from buttons to pronunciation and grammar. In the nursery school such instruction is much more a matter of showing when the occasion arises instead of telling in a formal lesson, than it will be in later years. Young children are still learning far better through experience than through symbols like words.

That is why a teacher must know the resources of her school and community for live teaching, for letting the children see and smell and hear the actual thing they are trying to learn about, and to handle, too, if possible. Perhaps they can also ask questions directly of "the man who knows all about it."

A story or picture just will not do the job as well. A bright five-year-old had been learning about the farm in a city school. They had stories, songs, pictures, dramatic play, and discussions. Then she went to live in the country and dictated a card to her former teacher, "Dear teacher: A cow is bigger than a book. I thought you would like to know."

The arts divide easily into appreciation and creative activities. For the former, what the children need is opportunity to enjoy pictures, statues, flowers, stories, poems, and music, enriched by contagion of the teacher's interest and pleasure in these things.

When it comes to the creative aspect, another approach is necessary. Here individual expression is the purpose of the activity and if the child is trying to copy a model or follow a pattern, he is merely imitating and not expressing his ideas. Of course the teacher should help a child understand the basic techniques and limitations of his materials and tools. She can show him how to manipulate scissors, teach him not to eat the paste or throw the sand, and at the proper time show him how to join two pieces of clay firmly or how to avoid dribbles by wiping his brush.

She must be cautious, however, about going much beyond this kind of instruction. If she tells him <u>what</u> to paint, or shows him "how to make a house" etc., she risks spoiling the whole creative value of the experience for the child, or worse, destroying his faith in his own ability to create independently, so that he gets stuck on a repetitive, imitative use of the material.

Stereotyped activities are not art at all but merely "busy work" in the worst sense of the word, -- a device for keeping the children out of the teacher's hair. Anyone who uses them should not complain of mothers who park children in front of the T.V.

There are times --- let us face it --- when just to keep the room from exploding into chaos is a worthy goal. However, there are ways of doing it which do not destroy children's initiative and creative self-confidence. As a first aid for such cases the young teacher needs to learn a number of small, activities and devices; but she should know

them for what they are, time-fillers, and child-calmers.

SPECIAL NURSERY SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

All that we have so far said of qualifications and competencies applies in a general way to any teacher in the Early Childhood field, but because of the nature of children from three to six, there are also unique demands upon the nursery school teacher.

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

One very obvious and basic fact about those children is that their language ability is very weak. The early three may still speak largely in brief phrases or extremely simple sentences, and many fives use only a few grammatical relationships. Even the extremely verbal fives who chatter incessantly often do so partly by parroting half-understood words and phrases. That is the source of many of their "cut sayings." Yet the teacher must be able to understand even the youngest and make herself understood by him.

She must learn and use the arts of non-verbal communication, the meanings of posture, of gesture, facial expression, ways of moving, direction and quality of glance, tones of voice. She must be able to read the language of play and see the real meaning hidden behind imperfectly expressed thoughts and superficial chatter. She must know the sound of happy laughter from that of tense, nervous laughter, and the tears of rage or fear from those of pain or disappointment. She needs that sort of extra-sensory perception which lets her pick up the emotional tone of a room, (or of a child) by indications so subtle that she is scarcely aware of them specifically. Through this sensitivity she can feel what is building up in a room and can take appropriate action if necessary before the children themselves realize what was about to happen. This ability requires time to develop, but even a young student can be helped to cultivate it by careful observation.

Small children, as we all know, catch the mood of adults quite uncannily. They feel a teacher's ability to catch theirs, too. The resulting communication below the verbal level forms a sure basis for the

valuable rapport which has been previously mentioned. Nor should we forget that this non-verbal understanding supplies the best of foundations for helping the little child to understand himself, and for his language development. If you know what he is feeling and thinking, you can help him tell about it. By doing so he both increases his command of language and acquires a tool which helps him deal with his next problem.

PROMOTING PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL CONTROLS

He will surely need all the help he can get, because another characteristic of the very young child is the conspicuous role of the physical and emotional in his consciousness. Much which is later handled by reflex action or subliminal habit still demands conscious effort. A good part of his early education is a matter of learning to handle himself smoothly, to acquire muscular controls and coordinations, and to learn what to do about the frustrations, the rages, the moments of irresponsible gaiety and mischievousness that sweep over him. These problesm though by no means fully solved, are much less overwhelming later and require less teacher guidance. An understanding nursery teacher will willingly spend much time and effort helping the child develop these controls, or distracting him from a problem which is temporarily too much for him.

FLEXIBLE PLANNING

The young child's easy distractability is both a convenience and a problem to his teacher. He is simply not able to sit still and control the direction of his thought (i.e. "pay attention") as an older person can. His attention is not yet fully under his control but is jerked hither and thither, by an itch, a moving object, a new sound, a memory, or the presence of other children. The teacher who would hold his attention must give such items worthy competition. Nor can she expect to hold it very long in any case. Concentrating on one thing is hard work for the child and he tires quickly. Her plans for teaching will have to be based on recurrent, rather than protracted interest on the part of her pupils.

This means that the teacher must be flexible. She starts with her

group to visit the post-office, perhaps, but on the way they encounter workmen unreeling and connecting electric cable for a new street telephone. Immediately the children are fascinated. She had better stop then and there and help them learn all they can about the job. It is good material for them, they are eager for it, direct observation is available, and the post-office will be there another day.

Similar flexibility is needed is needed in planning sequential learning, in order to utilize related fields of interest that open out from any specific experience. From these related experiences the teacher should find and develop those which are within the comprehension and interest of her group and in connection with which living experiences for them are available. The children mentioned above will undoubtedly go back to use that telephone, once it is ready, but then what? Will they call the school and get a familiar voice? Will they explore the school to see how many telephones there are? Investigate a switchboard? Consider dialing? Coin telephones? Make tin-can telephones for classroom use? Wonder how far one can call? Think of transatlantic service? Some fives might even do that!

The teacher must be able to plan how to develop any of these leads in a way that will have meaning for the children. She will offer intriguing experiences, learn from the children's responses, immediate and deferred, what they have understood and what needs to be clarified. Then she can plan the next step, or may decide that they have now reached a dead-end for pre-school mentality and so turn to a new field.

Her planning needs to be less direct and didactic than is customary with older children, because young children learn differently. She provides meaningful opportunities to learn, stimulates interest and curiosity, clears away obstacles to understanding, supplies appropriate materials and encouragement for creative expression, and offers suggestions and guidance as required: but there is no such thing as requiring a four-year-old to learn this or that for tomorrow's assignment. Learning comes to pre-schoolers as Aristotle tells us happiness comes to the virtuous -- largely as a by-product of activities with other conscious goals. It is

the teacher, not the children, who realizes that introducing them to all sorts of information, cultural values and customs (including symbol systems) promotes readiness for adventures in a wider intellectual world.

WORKING WITH PARENTS

Understanding a child comes from many sources, including contacts with the parents and home, and observing parents and child together. Knowing her children's parents and being able to work closely and harmoniously with them (not on them) for the child's progress is one of the things even more important in the nursery years than later. The child's ties to his parents are so strong, and the new ones to the teacher so important to him, that sharp divergencies between home and school points of view or handling may create deep conflicts in the child.

Nor can a teacher expect to impose her ideas on the parents merely because of her training. The child's notable progress at school is to the parents the best reason for respecting her judgment. She must not forget that the child belongs to them and that her role is secondary. Tact, patience, persuasiveness, and a flexible willingness to understand the other person's point of view, are often necessary in establishing and maintaining good cooperative relationships with parents. Once they are functioning, the teacher usually finds that she learns quite as much as the parents do.

ADAPTING TO INDIVIDUAL CHILDREN

Each child is unique, and the ability to make adaptations to his needs is therefore basic to success in the nursery school field. The nursery school teacher works constantly with individuals, who coalesce into a united group only occasionally and usually imperfectly. One of her jobs is to increase the child's ability to function as one of a group, but this takes time and meanwhile she works mostly with individuals. She understands that she cannot expect every five-year-old to print his name successfully any more than she expects every child to jump rope with the same facility.

Understanding each child well enough to adapt to him depends on many things. Parent contacts are important, as we have said, but so are talking to other teachers who have known him, reading their records and those of the medical and other special workers; but above all she depends on her own trained observations kept in focus by her sequential records on the child.

Through such considerations she sees that the next step in learning about plants is one thing for Josephine and another for Jerry, and she provides for both since she knows young children cannot do much adapting themselves. She sees that when Mary murmurs "My mommie says--" it expresses the identification with her mother which Mary needs just now and not the rejection of the teacher's authority which prompts the same remark from some of the others. On the other hand, she understands that shy little Jaime cannot feel secure in the nursery without identifying closely with the teacher. He has to be near her and live for her smiles and attention for a while. She will give him this needed support, as she tries to give each child the concerned attention he needs.

MANAGING EMOTIONAL TIES

The children respond in different ways and degrees: most of them are fond of her, some quite devoted. Being human, she finds this very satisfying. It is one of the joys of being a nursery school teacher and she can count it an honestly earned fringe benefit, --- unless it becomes too important to her.

If it does, she may be tempted to try to buy affection by failing to set firm limits when she knows they belong. She may not start weaning Jaime from his dependence on her as soon as he has gained enough self-confidence to begin to stand along. She will very likely find it unduly hard to part with her children when they are ready for promotion, and will distrust the next teacher's ability to meet their needs. She may be over-critical of parents. The truth is that such a teacher is using children to meet her own emotional needs instead of putting their needs first.

This brings us right back to two essential qualities of a good

teacher which we mentioned in the beginning -- respect for the child as a developing personality in his own right, and a well balanced, emotionally satisfied personality of her own. Of course the affection her children give her is, and should be, an emotional satisfaction to a teacher. It is only when this source of satisfaction if not adequately balanced by others that there is danger to the children.

SUMMARY

In closing, let us sum up briefly the ingredients that go into the making of a nursery school teacher. First the ones she must have to succeed. These are not necessarily the first to develop, they may go on increasing as long as she teaches, but they are the real essentials:

1. A belief that the early stages of growth and learning are as important and interesting as the later ones. Faith in the growth drive, -- that "instinct within us that reaches and towers."
2. A stable, cheerful personality and at least moderately good physical health.
3. Respect for each child as a unique individual, and an affectionate interest in children.
4. Basic knowledge of child development and the related disciplines.
5. Knowledge of appropriate subject matter, methods, and materials, at the same time recognizing that a teacher can hardly hope to be expert in every subject.

To make a good nursery school teacher, it would seem requisite that she would possess these things to at least a moderate degree. When they are present superlatively one has an outstanding teacher. All of these elements may increase and deepen with maturity. A person who excels in a few of these may already be a fine teacher, and can become even better as she works on the others.

There are many things which may not be exactly essential, but which make unique contributions to the picture of a teacher the children never forget. Be happy if you have them, any of them. Following are some

elements, which if developed can make a good teacher into an outstanding one.

1. A sense of humor and enjoyment of nonsense.
2. Flexibility and creative imagination.
3. Ability to see things naively, like a child.
4. Knowledge of locally available resources for teaching.
5. Skill in picking up subtle indications of problems or growth needs.
6. Ability to work well with other adults, respecting each at his own stage of growth, as we do the children, for we are all still growing.
7. Special abilities and interests, which help develop a rich personality. The teacher who has special flare for music, or woodwork, or growing plants, for example, can use it so well that it helps balance other weaknesses. However, she must still undertake a well-rounded program, even if she does not do it all well because some of the children may especially need the things she feels weak in or bored with. She can always make a start with them and learn as she goes.

Learn as she goes! Doesn't every good teacher do that, for no one reaches perfection or should be expected to. But one can keep learning and have a wonderful time with the children while deepening and improving her own unique strengths. It is not only the children who can grow -- and rejoice in their growth! Once a teacher is aware of the possibility of her own growth, she can devote herself happily to one of the most enjoyable, exasperating, stimulating, exhausting, and generally delightful jobs in the world.